

PROGRAM APPROVALS

WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR PROGRAM APPROVALS?

In New Hampshire, the Postsecondary Education Commission (herein referred to as the Commission) is the state agency charged with the responsibility for overseeing state education/training programs for veterans to utilize their Montgomery GI Bill education benefits. Specifically, it is the Veterans State Approvals function within the Commission that has this responsibility. The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) refers to us as the State Approving Agency (SAA). There is a SAA located in each state.

WHAT TYPES OF PROGRAMS MUST BE APPROVED?

Any educational or training institution (including businesses) which enrolls, or is likely to enroll, veterans in training programs must be approved by the Commission. Examples are:

- Degree programs
- Non-college degree (NCD) programs such as diplomas and certificates
- Postgraduate residency programs
- Correspondence programs
- Flight training
- High school diploma, GED or post-diploma certificate programs
- Apprenticeship and on-the-job-training programs

WHAT NEEDS TO BE APPROVED?

Programs leading to an educational or immediate vocational goal such as a degree, certificate, postgraduate residency, or non-collegiate technical or trade program. (Programs offered at branch campuses or facilities other than main campuses are approved separately. Distance education programs are also approved separately.)

Policies on attendance, academic progress, evaluation of credit for prior education and training, student conduct, and specific types of instruction such as television courses, distance education and other independent studies, practicums or internships, English-as-a-Second Language or other developmental programs.

Publications such as catalogs, student handbooks, and class schedules.

Changes to any of these programs, policies, or publications are to be reported to the Commission. Failure to do so could be grounds for the suspension of approval, which may cause for the interruption of benefits to veterans.

HOW TO APPLY FOR APPROVAL

There are two types of approval: Initial and Continued Approval.

Initial Approval

This is the first-time approval of a program.

The initial approval involves the submission of a completed application to the Commission and is followed by a site visit, referred to as an inspection visit.

Institutions and businesses applying for the first time should submit a telephonic or written request to PEC, asking for an application and indicating whether they:

- Are accredited by a regional or specialized accrediting body recognized by the U.S. Secretary of Education for financial aid purposes.
- Are licensed by an appropriate New Hampshire state licensing body; e.g. Board of Barbering, Cosmetology, & Esthetics.
- Have been in continuous operation for at least two years [applies only to private (profit/non-profit) Non-College Degree (NCD) Granting Schools and Non-Accredited Degree Granting institutions].

Continued Approval

Periodically, the Commission will update an institution's approval. This continued approval is normally performed on an annual basis for those institutes who had veterans enrolled in the previous year. A supervisory visit is performed to review the institute's documents and policies, DVA paperwork, and to ensure the institutes' policies are being followed. To accomplish the latter, an examination of students' records may be necessary.

Between approvals, specific changes, such as adding new or modifying existing programs, revising policies or calendar dates, and releasing new documentations are treated as revisions to the current approval.

To continue approval, an institute must notify the Commission in writing upon:

- Printing revised catalogs, handbooks, or schedules. Two sets (three sets if you are a degree granting institution) of each publication-certified by a school official that the information is **"true and correct in content and policy"** - must be sent to the Commission.
- Adding or revising programs. Submit a letter requesting approval of the new program. Include a course outline, course description, number of credit hours and provide the qualifications for new instructors.
- Changing a program's name or curriculum. This must include a course outline, course descriptions, and the number of credit or clock hours.
- Naming new Certifying Official(s). Complete DVA form 22-8794 and send it to the Commission.
- Adding facilities or branch campuses, or changing an address.
- Changing ownership or management.
- Revisions in accreditation or state licensure status.

- Altering currently approved policies affecting standards of progress, attendance, student conduct, credit for previous training and policies relating to practicums, independent study, or cooperative education.

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE CERTIFYING OFFICIAL?

The Certifying Official, named by the institution or business, acts as their liaison with the Commission and DVA on matters involving veterans. This person informs us of any changes requiring approval and sends us certified copies of the school's publications, and certifies veteran enrollments to DVA. During our visits, the Certifying Official meets with us to provide necessary files and information.

WHAT ARE THE CONDITIONS FOR MAINTAINING APPROVAL?

To maintain approval, both accredited and non-accredited schools and colleges must meet the following conditions.

- The catalog or bulletin must include an institution's:
 1. Standards of progress (must contain a definite statement that defines the grading system, minimum grades considered satisfactory, conditions for interruption for unsatisfactory grades or progress, description of probationary periods, and conditions for dismissal and re-admittance.
 2. Attendance policy.
 3. Conduct policy.
 4. Progress records furnished to students and retained by the Institution.
- The institute must maintain:
 1. A written record of a veteran's previous education and training, clearly indicating that appropriate credit for prior training has been given and training shortened proportionately.
 2. Cumulative individual records containing the results of each enrollment period, including all courses and grades.
 3. Adequate records showing the progress of each veteran, including notices of course withdrawals and last dates of attendance.
 4. Attendance records of veterans enrolled in courses not leading to standard college degrees.
 5. Evidence that tuition and fees charged to and received from veterans are the same as those for other students.
 6. Complete records and copies of all advertising, sales, and enrollment materials used by or on behalf of the school for the preceding 12 months.
- The institute agrees to:
 1. Enforce all policies.
 2. Notify the DVA within 30 days of all changes when veterans do not achieve satisfactory academic progress.
 3. Notify the DVA within 30 days of all changes in hours of credit or attendance, including interruption or termination.

4. Notify the Commission of any changes affecting approved programs, including changes to location, course offerings, degree requirements, and academic regulations.
 5. Make available during regular business hours all required records outlined above to representatives of the Commission and DVA during periodic on-site visits.
- Evaluations
 1. Evaluations of the following must occur: the quality, content, and length of programs; personnel qualifications; facilities adequacy of resources and financial soundness; school calendars and fee schedules.
 2. In addition to the preceding, the following conditions regarding refunds and evaluations apply to all **non-accredited** institutions:
 - Refunds
 1. A pro rata refund policy must be in place which assures that the amount charged for tuition, fees and other charges for a portion of a course does not exceed the approximate pro rata portion of the total charges for tuition, fees and other charges that the length of the completed portion of the course bears to the total length.
 2. Refund policies more favorable to veterans than pro rata refunds are acceptable.
 - The institute agrees to:
 1. Issue a certificate by the school indicating the approved course and indicating that training was satisfactorily completed.
 2. Comply with all local, city, county, municipal, state, and federal regulations, such as fire codes, building, and sanitation codes.
 3. Show that they are financially sound and capable of fulfilling its commitments for training, when required.
 4. Show that the institute's administrators, directors, owners, and instructors are of good reputation and character, when required.

WHAT ARE SUPERVISORY VISITS?

Unlike site visits, which occur at the time of initial approval, supervisory visits are normally conducted annually by the Commission, as the State Approving Agency, to review an institution's compliance with veterans' approval requirements.

For a supervisory visit, institutes should have the following available: files containing each veteran's information showing attendance, transfer credit, student transcripts, enrollment status, standards of progress, and all certification paperwork. In addition, the Commission may request exit meetings with other staff, faculty, and students.